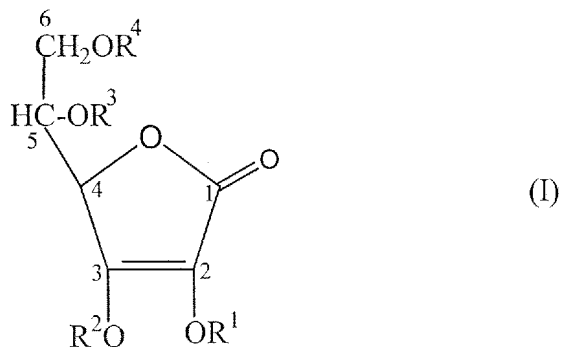


Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of the claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Previously Presented) A compound of the general formula I:



wherein R^1 is a C_8 - C_{18} acyl group, an amino acid group, or a C_1 - C_{17} alkyl group; R^2 is ammonium, a monovalent metal cation of Na^+ or K^+ , a divalent alkaline earth metal cation of Mg^{++} , Ca^{++} or Ba^{++} , or a trivalent metal cation of Al^{+++} or Fe^{+++} ; and each of R^3 or R^4 , independently, is hydrogen, a C_2 - C_{22} acyl group, an amino acid residue, or a C_1 - C_{17} alkyl group.

2. (Currently Amended) A compound according to claim 1 wherein R^2 is ammonium or a monovalent metal cation of $Na^+[[,]]$ or K^+ .

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3. **(Currently Amended)** A compound according to claim 1 wherein R^2 is a divalent alkaline earth metal cation of Mg^{++} , $Ca^{++}[[,]]$ or Ba^{++} or a trivalent metal cation of Al^{+++} or Fe^{+++} .

4. **(Previously Presented)** A compound according to claim 1 wherein R^2 is Na^+ , K^+ , Mg^{++} , or Ca^{++} .

5. **(Previously Presented)** A compound according to claim 1 wherein R^1 is a C_8 - C_{18} carboxylic acyl group derived from a straight or branched, saturated or unsaturated carboxylic acid selected from caprylic, capric, undecanoic, lauric, tridecanoic, myristic, pentadecanoic, palmitic, palmitoleic, stearic, oleic, linoleic, or linolenic acid.

Claim 6 **(Cancelled)**.

7. **(Previously Presented)** A compound according to claim 5 wherein R^1 is capryloyl or palmitoyl.

8. **(Original)** A compound according to claim 1 wherein R^1 is the residue of a natural α -amino acid such as glycine, alanine, serine, leucine, isoleucine, phenylalanine, tyrosine or glutamic acid.

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9. (Original) A compound according to claim 1 wherein R^1 is the residue of glycine.

10. (Previously Presented) A compound according to claim 1 wherein R^3 and R^4 are hydrogen, R^2 is ammonium, or a monovalent metal cation of Na^+ or K^+ , a divalent alkaline earth metal cation of Mg^{++} , Ca^{++} or Ba^{++} or a trivalent metal cation of Al^{+++} or Fe^{+++} , and R^1 is a C_8 - C_{18} acyl derived from a fatty acid.

11. (Currently Amended) A compound according to claim 10 wherein R^2 is a monovalent metal cation of selected from $Na^+[[,]]$ or K^+ , or a divalent metal cation of selected from Mg^{++} or Ca^{++} .

12. (Original) The compound according to claim 1 wherein R^3 and R^4 are hydrogen, R^2 is Na^+ and R^1 is capryloyl.

13. (Original) The compound according to claim 1 wherein R^3 and R^4 are hydrogen, R^2 is Na^+ and R^1 is palmitoyl.

14. (Previously Presented) A composition comprising as an active ingredient a compound according to claim 1.

15. (Original) A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 14 for treatment of conditions, diseases or

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disorders associated with vitamin C deficiency and/or where a supplemental administration of vitamin C may be beneficial.

16. (Original) A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 14 for treatment of cancer.

17. (Original) A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 16 further comprising lipoic acid or a chemotherapeutic agent.

18. (Original) A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 15 for enhancement of the immune system.

19. (Original) A nutraceutical composition according to claim 14, optionally comprising other nutraceuticals.

20. (Original) A pharmaceutical or nutraceutical composition according to claim 14 adapted for oral administration, optionally in the form of micro/nanocapsules confining an effective amount of the compound of formula (I).

21. (Original) A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 14 for topical use.

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22. (Original) A cosmetic composition according to claim 14 together with cosmetic applicable carriers, excipients or diluents.

23. (Original) A cosmetic composition according to claim 22 for topical application for skin care.

24. (Original) A cosmetic composition according to claim 23 for reducing fine lines, wrinkles or skin roughness, skin whitening or stimulation of collagen synthesis.

25. (Original) A cosmetic composition according to claim 24 for use as anti-aging agent.

26. (Original) A cosmetic composition according to claim 24 for treatment of photodamaged skin.

27. (Original) A cosmetic composition according to claim 22 in the form of a lotion, cream, gel, or in liquid form.

28. (Original) The cosmetic composition according to claim 22 for use as moisturizing cream, anti-ageing cream, anti-wrinkle cream, sunscreen cream, skin whitening and for stimulating collagen synthesis.

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29. (Original) The cosmetic composition according to claim 22 further comprising one or more active ingredients such as vitamin E, vitamin P, retinol, retinol esters, hyaluronic acid, and/or algal extracts.

30. (Original) A dermatological composition according to claim 14 for treating or controlling skin states or conditions associated with vitamin C deficiency and/or where a supplemental administration of vitamin C may be beneficial.

31. (Original) A method of skin care, particularly for reducing fine lines, wrinkles and skin roughness, or for stimulation of collagen synthesis in a mammal in need thereof, which comprises topically administering a composition comprising a compound of general formula (I) of claim 1 to said mammal in need.